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**Testimony of  
Michelle Noehren  
Events & Special Projects Director  
The Permanent Commission on the Status of Women  
Before the  
Children's Committee  
March 6, 2014**

**Re: H.B. 5035, AAC Toxic Fire Retardants in Children's Products  
H.B. 5036, AAC Children's Products and Chemicals of High Concern  
H.B. 5354, AAC Chemicals of High Concern to Children**

Senators Bartolomeo and Linares, Representatives Urban and Betts, and members of the committee, thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony on behalf of the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women (PCSW) in support of the above referenced bills.

**H.B. 5036, AAC Children's Products and Chemicals of High Concern  
H.B. 5354, AAC Chemicals of High Concern to Children**

Both H.B 5036 and H.B 5354 would direct the Department of Public Health to identify chemicals of concern to children and would require that the Department report to the Legislature every two years about the prevalence of the chemicals identified and whether any action should be taken. This legislation, if passed, would help protect the health of children and pregnant women.

The PCSW comes at this issue from the lens of how it impacts women. Firstly, research indicates that many of the toxic chemicals being used to manufacture consumer products have the ability to cross the placenta. A recent example of this is new research from Rutgers<sup>1</sup> that says a chemical used to create the color yellow, called PCB-11, is now being found in children's clothing, paper goods and toys. Research indicates that PCB's cross the placenta as well as pass through breast milk impacting both moms and babies. Adverse health impacts of PCB-11 are still being discussed but it's generally agreed upon that PCB's negatively impact the immune system, reproductive system and the nervous system.<sup>2</sup> Other chemicals like BPA and Teflon chemicals PFOA and PFOS, have been shown to cross the placenta as well.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> ABC News, New Concerns Raised About Yellow Dyes, Feb. 2014 [<http://abcnews.go.com/Health/concerns-raised-yellow-dyes/story?id=22640765>]

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Health Effects of PCBs [<http://www.epa.gov/osw/hazard/tsd/pcbs/pubs/effects.htm>]

<sup>3</sup> Washington Toxics Coalition, Toxic Chemicals Can Pass From Pregnant Woman To Child [<http://watoxics.org/toxicwatch/no-one-can-escape-toxic-chemicals>]

Secondly, women are the primary family members purchasing products for their families. Most mothers have no idea that toxic chemicals are being used in many of the baby and children's products they put in their carts because the common assumption is that if a product can be bought off a shelf it must have undergone safety testing. Unfortunately, that is simply not the case. Fewer than 2% of the more than 80,000 synthetic chemicals in commerce have been reviewed for safety.<sup>4</sup> Mothers want to have confidence that the items they buy for their loved ones are safe.

### **H.B. 5035, AAC Toxic Fire Retardants in Children's Products**

H.B. 5035 would ban the use of toxic flame retardants, particularly toxic tris, in products geared towards children ages three and under. According to a report entitled *Hidden Hazards in the Nursery*, many of the products mothers use with their babies contain toxic fire retardants. The products cited include breastfeeding support pillows, car seats and diaper changing pads, among others. Toxic tris has been shown to be a carcinogen, a hormone disruptor, and to have an impact on the nervous system.

Another report called *Naptime Nightmares: Toxic Flame Retardants in Child Care Nap Mats* from the Center for Environmental Health found that many foam nap mats on the market contain more than one type of chemical flame retardant and multiple mats contain Tris. Naptime is meant to be a time of rest for children, not a time for them to be exposed to harmful chemicals.

We applaud the committee's continued attention to the use of toxic chemicals in children's products. Connecticut needs a more comprehensive approach to this problem and these bills are a step in the right direction. Children should be able to grow up in an environment that is healthy and safe and mothers should be able to purchase products without fear of causing their children harm.

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<sup>4</sup> Coalition for a Safe & Healthy CT, [<http://safehealthycf.files.wordpress.com/2014/01/new-brochure.pdf>]